

# Juxtaposition of the Past and the Present: A Pragmatic Stylistic Analysis of the Short Story “Too Much Happiness” by Alice Munro

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**Abstract**—Alice Munro is a Canadian short-story writer who has been regarded as one of the greatest writers of fiction. Owing to her great contribution to fiction, she was the first Canadian woman and the only short-story writer ever to be rewarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013. Her literary works include collections of short stories and one book published as a novel. Her stories concentrate on the human condition and the human relationships as seen through the lens of daily life. The setting in most of her stories is her native Canada- small towns much similar to the one where she grew up. Her writing style is not only realistic but is also characterized by autobiographical, historical and regional features. The aim of this research is to analyze one of the key stylistic devices often adopted by Munro in her fictions: the juxtaposition of the past and the present, with reference to the title story in Munro's short story collection *Too Much Happiness*. The story under exploration is a brief biography of the Russian Mathematician and novelist Sophia Kovalevsky (1850 – 1891), the first woman to be appointed as a professor of Mathematics at a European University in Stockholm. Thus, the story has a historical protagonist and is set on the European continent. Munro dramatizes the severe historical and cultural constraints that hindered the career of the protagonist. A pragmatic stylistic framework is being adopted and the qualitative analysis is supported by textual reference. The stylistic analysis reveals that the juxtaposition of the past and the present is one of the distinctive features that characterize the author; in a typical Munroian manner, the protagonist often moves between the units of time: the past, the present and, sometimes, the future. Munro's style is simple and direct but cleverly constructed and densely complicated by the presence of deeper layers and stories within the story. Findings of the research reveal that the story under investigation merits reading and analyzing. It is recommended that this story and other stories by Munro are analyzed to further explore the features of her art and style.

**Keywords**—Alice Munro, *Too Much Happiness*, juxtaposition of past and present, pragmatic stylistics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE contemporary Canadian short story has often occupied a particular position among literary genres in American literature. It flourished during the sixties of the twentieth century when Canadian short story writers became more interested in new themes and novel literary techniques. At that time, they refused to adopt the traditional plot and moved their interest towards characterization. Through using a typical Canadian setting, their stories started to reflect the social events of their time and the diversity of life in Canadian

provinces [1].

One of the prominent Canadian short story writers is Alice Munro. She was born in Ontario in 1931. Munro is regarded as one of the greatest writers of fiction and has been called "the Canadian Chekhov" by many critics. Owing to her remarkable contribution to Canadian literature, Munro was the only short-story writer and the first Canadian woman who was rewarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013. Her ambitious literary works include collections of short stories and one book published as a novel, though it is in fact a set of interrelated stories which actually falls between these two genres. Some of her works are *The Moon of Jupiter* (1982), *The Love of Good Women* (1988), *Open Secrets* (1994), *Run away* (2004), *The View of Castel Rock* (2006), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and *Dear Life* (2012). Her stories, which have been translated into many languages, focus on the human condition and the human relationships as seen through everyday situations and events. Among her fundamental themes are grief and humiliation, fatal accidents and terminal illness. Her stories reach the complexity level of a novel in a few short pages. Most of them are set in her native Canada in small towns much similar to the one where Munro grew up. For this reason, Munro is often called a territorial writer since the focus of her fiction is on Ontario. Despite the fact that South Western Ontario is the locus of Munro's narratives, her reputation as a short-story writer is international. Her stories explore the complexities of human life in a plain prose style. Though the fictions are not wholly autobiographical, they typically mirror the writer's own life experiences and revolve around women's lives. In general, Munro's writing style is not only realistic but is also characterized by autobiographical, historical and regional features. One of the key characteristics of Munro's fiction is the way the author represents a whole life in a number of pages, constantly navigating between the present situation and past events. There is often a disruption of chronological time where the past, the present and the future intermingle and, thus, their normal historical sequence is lost [2], [3].

The short story “Too Much Happiness”, the title story in Munro's collection, is based on “Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky” (1983). It is a brief biography of the Russian Mathematician and novelist Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-1891), the first woman who was appointed as a Mathematics Professor at one of the European Universities in Stockholm. Thus, the story has a historical protagonist and is set on the European continent. In this version of the biography, Munro dramatizes the severe historical and cultural

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constraints that hindered the career of the protagonist. The author produces a powerful picture of the scientist and the artist who is searching for truth in spite of the surrounding social restrictions and historical settings. With regard to its structure, the story is organized in five numbered parts which encompass a series of juxtaposed fragments that project separate or mixed scenes of the life of the protagonist in the present, the past or the future [4].

One aspect of Munro's art which is worthy of research is the linguistic realization of the juxtaposition of the past and the present, being a key stylistic device in Munro's fictions, through context and deictic expressions. Hence, this paper is an attempt to explore the role played by these pragmatic devices in realizing the constant shift between the past and the present in Munro's fiction. Furthermore, despite the observable overlap between the two disciplines of literary stylistics and Pragmatics, there has been little work bringing them together and investigating the interface between them [5]. Therefore, this research is an attempt to explore the interrelatedness of these two disciplines.

The aim of this research is to highlight and investigate one of Munro's salient stylistic features, which is the juxtaposition of the past and the present, with reference to the title story in her short story collection *Too Much Happiness*. The research is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the linguistic realizations of the juxtaposition of the past and the present in the short story "Too Much Happiness" by Alice Munro?
- 2) To what extent does the juxtaposition of the past and the present as a stylistic device contribute to realizing the artistic function in the short story "Too Much Happiness"?

A Pragmatic Stylistic approach has been adopted by the researcher and the analysis has been supported by textual reference. Thus, the parts showing the disruption of chronological order have been singled out and scrutinized. The context of these parts is explored and deictic expressions such as tensed verbs, pronouns and spatial and temporal deictic expressions are identified. Furthermore, the effect of employing the juxtaposition of the past and the present as a stylistic device is illustrated.

The paper starts with an introduction followed by a theoretical background section which highlights the main characteristics of Munro's art and style and some features of her narrative discourse. The third section is a short review of some recent related studies. The following section is a brief section on the theoretical framework adopted by the researcher and the procedures of analysis. Next, a stylistic analysis of the title story "Too Much Happiness", with a special focus on the juxtaposition of the past and the present, being one prominent feature of Munro's narrative universe, is presented. The paper ends with some concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### A. Characteristics of Munro's Art and Style

This section highlights some of the prominent features of Munro's art and style. It foregrounds some of the recurrent themes in her fiction, outlines some of the autobiographical, regional and historio-cultural features, and presents the major characteristics of her style and narrative discourse.

#### 1) Themes and Aspects

Alice Munro is undoubtedly regarded as Canada's most outstanding short story writer. She is a master of the short story genre. Since the publication of her first collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, in 1986, Munro has written a good number of remarkable short stories. Consequently, she won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013 and she has been described as modern-day Anton Chekhov. As [6] opines, Munro has produced and continually developed her own peculiar format of the short story as a genre.

Among the recurrent themes in Munro's fictions are the rejection of conservatism and anonymity, the stirring of the creative impulse, the refusal to be imprisoned by the narrow definitions of womanhood and the intricacy of female sexuality. Munro is sensitive to the treasons, duplicities, passions, compromises and commitments of human relationships. She has talked about 'the complexity of things, the things within things'. She has a natural ability to describe the 'shameless, marvelous, shattering absurdity' of life and to portray it in its endless, shapeless strangeness. Upon reading her fictions, readers enter a New World where they experience life in reality and are invited to re-examine their understanding of art and language, love and relationship, generational connections, childhood and adulthood, relations between men and women, and life and death. For Munro, human life is not static; rather it is in a state of constant flux and transformation. Munro's narrative art concentrates on the complexities of life and the intricate happenings of human lives with their accompanying feelings of hope, joy, suffering and pain. Her works constitute a detailed record of the enduring condition of human existence. Because Munro's fictional works portray life in all its realities and highlight all the secret mysteries that characterize human existence employing complicated narrative techniques, both the reader and the critic are left overwhelmed. In her short stories, there are no straightforward progressions, no character arcs or clear endings. Her ambitious works are characterized by modulations of tone and colour that delight and surprise her readers. In her fictions, life is revealed as a layering of secrets and lies and a mesh of unrelated events. By employing realism mixed with humor, paradox, irony, eagle-eyed details and split personalities, Munro is reflecting the absurdity and ambiguity of our world. In fact, Munro's narrative art has undergone gradual change from a surface depiction of life incidents in the first collection of her literary works to a representation of the complexities of life, relationships and the diverse situations of life in her subsequent ambitious works [1].

Similar to the Russian writer, Anton Chekov, Munro is

fascinated with the failings of love and work; she has the same penetrating psychological insight, an obsession with time and the events taking place in small town settings. Reference [7] opines that Munro's fiction is basically characterized by the "epiphanic moment", the "sudden enlightenment" and the "revelatory details". Unlike novelists, Munro is not interested in the great moments of our lives. The short story builds on minor events and teaches us how certain forces can shape our life [1]. One key aspect of Munro's narrative art is that it delves into the human psyche and attempts to explore the hidden self in human beings. Her stories can be re-read from a psychoanalytical perspective. Whether read in the first or third-person viewpoint, Munro's stories feature an emotional depth and intense feelings of humans while they overcome the challenges of life. In her fictional universe, the main focus is on the characters whereas the plot plays a secondary role. Another significant feature of Munro's writing is connection to the land, to what Margret Atwood has called a 'harsh and vast geography.' Munro's skill at describing the colours and modulations of the natural world and the life of the wilderness equals her ability of revealing the surface of the lives of her characters [10].

Munro's originality lies in dealing with universal themes which are based on philosophical foundations. Munro depicts the theme of feminine identity and feministic search. Munro presents a sympathetic view of women. Female characters are portrayed as dealing with oppression and trying to gain respect and a feeling of self-actualization. In Munro's stories, characters often move towards self-awareness and a re-identification of their selves. In addition, Munro deals with themes that are typically Canadian. One of these topics is the question of Canadian identity which was an issue of debate since the 1970s; her protagonists are continually asking themselves whether they are the same in substance. Another topic commonly dealt with by Canadian women writers including Munro is survival. Before Munro's protagonists reach the destination of their journey, they are confronted with many obstacles and live their lives painfully. The reader of Munro's fiction is usually surprised by novel situations, events and characters projected by the writer and intellectually stimulated through using an immense amount of material and producing a magnificent link between the present and the past [1].

### 2) Characterization

In Munro's short stories there is usually a close connection between the plot and the character; however, the main attraction lies in her characters and her great ability of characterization. Munro's works frequently have female protagonists who are often trapped in the narrow worlds of male dominance. Munro reveals to us the complexity of their inner lives: the emotional, the intellectual and the moral features of human personality. Furthermore, they are written from a female perspective as in the case of "Too Much Happiness". Munro's art is feminine- that of the house, furnishing, interior decoration, food and fashion; all of which are mixed with feminist comments, attitudes and protests [8].

In Munro's fiction the protagonists are always confronted with contradictory emotions and impulses. Munro's characters are very dynamic since they exhibit a capacity to change. Her static characters leave the plot as they entered it, untouched by the events that have taken place to the protagonist. In portraying her characters, Munro uses several techniques of direct and indirect characterization and reveals her characters through using names, appearance, dialogue or action. Munro's characters experience a sharp conflict between dependence and ambition. They have a rich imagination and should be able to think in order to avoid dire consequences; furthermore, they normally face an uncertain future [1].

In Munro's fictional universe the narrators are melancholic, philosophical and at an ironic distance from their lives. They are also having intelligence, ferocity of spirit and a sense of disappointment at the way life is spoiled by its unexpected twists. In *Lives of Girls and Women* (1973), a collection of interlinked short stories, Del says: "I wanted to know . . . I wanted death pinned down and isolated behind a wall of particular facts and circumstances, not floating around loose, ignored but powerful, waiting to get in anywhere" Del is the classic Munro narrator; she is a woman who is continually seeking self-identification and, therefore, she is in a state of opposition to her upbringing, her family and her hometown [10].

### 3) Realism

According to Munro, the function of art is to reflect reality. In her short stories, she takes a piece of reality and weaves it into the rest of her story even if the reader might disagree or be shocked at what is written. She draws material for her short stories from her personal experience and the experience of the others; however, she views the material from her own eyes; in this way, she transforms this material into art. In her stories Munro heightens realism to the extent that the truth becomes self-evident to the reader. Similar to William Wordsworth, she transforms ordinary life into art and creates material out of her observations and memories. Munro believes that her stories are "elaborations and combinations that it is very hard to figure out what they started from". When Munro reflects reality, she actually reflects it. She views herself as an intellectual writer who is concerned with ideas and gets excited by what might be called the surface of life. What is usually important for her is to arrive at the actual texture or exact tone of how things are. Therefore, one remarkable feature of Munro's art is that a didactic approach is deliberately avoided. Munro believes more in the perfection of the form of art than in the moralization of art so that real life would be portrayed in art [1].

Memory plays a significant role in Munro's fictional narratives since it has the power to shape our lives. Munro claims that it is memory that helps a narrator to move on telling their story and telling people different versions of these stories. She believes that it is hard to manage our lives without a "powerful ongoing narrative"; inside such inspiring stories, there is some awful mysterious entity called THE TRUTH, which fictitious works are partially describing. One way to do

this is to explore what memory does during different stages of our own lives [9].

A typical Munro story includes sudden abrupt shifts of time, place and subject in the sequence of the story, the reasons for which are not immediately clear. In her art of storytelling, this strategy is adopted by Munro in order to create the impression that what we read is similar to real-life events and situations. While narrating their stories, Munro's narrators do not arrive at any conclusive ends, but rather leave the stories open-ended for the readers to arrive at the hidden meanings. In Munro's narrative art, which is characterized by being paradoxical and ambivalent, life is portrayed realistically in its minute details. In other words, the structure of her stories reflects the utter complexities of life [10].

Munro's narrators often turn to the past, revisit their homes and return to places where they used to live. Reference [11] remarks that memory functions as a moral tool for Munro as an author of short stories since it makes our past vividly revealed to us by events taking place in the present. Due to memory, our lives move on and make sense at the same time. For this reason, Munro's narratives are living things that are never still on the page.

Munro's fictional universe is characterized by endings that are often mysterious and consist of short sentences. A case in point is the short story "Too Much Happiness" which ends with these words: "Sophia's name has been given to a crater on the moon" [3].

#### 4) Historio-Cultural Features

Munro's short stories are historio-cultural texts where the author re-writes history and questions given facts while at the same time adding a fictional touch to its events. In her works, Munro contextualizes the socio-cultural setting and examines the lives of women at a close angle. Each of her stories problematizes the conventional norms imposed on women and dramatizes women's growing consciousness and the reflective self. Her protagonists, mostly girls and women, encounter many challenges in the course of their lives from childhood to maturity and this, in turn, leads to the evolution of the self. Through her art of storytelling, the artist previews the cultural norms that govern women's lives. Munro's art dramatizes women's subjectivity and their inability to articulate their emotions and desires. Moreover, she convincingly conveys to the reader the view that it is difficult to comprehend the happenings in life [8], [10].

#### 5) Regional and Autobiographical Features

Munro is among the writers who have placed a certain region, which is Southwestern Ontario in her case and its inhabitants, on the map of world literature. In spite of the fact that some of Munro's works might have other settings such as Western Canada or Scotland, Albania or Australia, the majority of her stories are set in the small town of South western Ontario. This region has been recreated by Munro; however, instead of recreating what is known or recognizable, she foregrounded the surprising or puzzling features of the region [8].

Munro has always acknowledged her inclination towards transforming some of her actual experiences into fiction. Reference [2] asserts that Munro has always admitted that the raw material for her narratives comes from her own life experiences. In a similar vein, [12] remarks that Alice Munro has never been a typical autobiographical writer; however, her narrative universe projects certain themes and patterns that reflect the experiences and situations of her own life. Munro attempts to transform life situations and events into meaningful fiction. Some of her short stories are greatly inspired by her life experiences.

#### 6) Form and Style

A pertinent question frequently asked by readers and critics is why Munro has confined her art to the form of the short story in particular. Munro's choice of this genre was actually deliberate since it served as a platform for projecting the marginalized lives of women and the limitation of women's space in patriarchal settings and also for voicing her protest against the male attitudes. Munro comments that she does not like writing novels and does not know how to write them. She has always been terrified at the thought that readers might get bored with the details of minor incidents. In fact, writing in the form of a short story enabled Munro to have a firm grip on the narrative structure of her work and to manipulate the language of the text so as to meet her artistic requirements. Each of her works turned into a text that provided a reading into women's lives. The goal of Munro's art was not only to project life but also to explore what exists beyond the boundaries of reality. Therefore, Munro's writings represent a search for the truth of life [10].

In her short stories Munro characteristically puts in "too many things going on at the same time," where readers are urged to accommodate these things by making their own connections. These complications explain why her readers maintain the view that her short stories are regarded as more like novels. This assertion also justifies why she finally won the Nobel Prize making her one of the old recipients of this prize at the age of eighty-two and the only one who is a short story writer. The fundamental of all Munro's works is the quest for the truth of our own existence [13]. In commenting on Munro's prosaic writing style, [14] states that it places the fantastic next to the ordinary, with each crossing the other in ways that simply reiterate life patterns. Furthermore, her writing style displays the ambiguities of life: "ironic and simple at the same time", "mottoes of godliness and honor and flaming bigotry", "special, useless knowledge", "tones of shrill and happy outrage", and "the bad taste, the heartlessness, the joy of it".

Munro's work has contributed to elevating the status of the short story genre in the minds of her readers and critics alike. During an interview with the CBC host Peter Gzowski in 1994, Munro explained what she was attempting to do in her remarkable works: she wanted to move away from the things that actually happened to the things that might have happened or the things that take place in fantasy; she usually attempts to put together all these things that happen in reality and

imagination in a coherent construction [13].

With regard to the mode of narration, it is observed that Munro uses both the first person "I" and the third person omniscient viewpoint. The third person narration offers the reader a view of the setting of the story and the flow of thoughts, emotions, etc. in the mind of the narrator. In third-person narratives, the perspective may change many times so that events can be viewed from different angles. In Munro's later longer stories that can be termed novellas, there is a shift towards third person narration. In "Too Much Happiness" Munro presents a third-person narrator who narrates the experiences of Sophia, the protagonist, her thoughts, sensations and view of life [10].

Since most of Munro's stories take place in native Canada, and particularly in Ontario, her imagination is stimulated by that area. She typically speaks in a simple conversational voice using the rhetoric of her people. She is sarcastic and sometimes harsh in her narration. Munro uses paradox as a structural and linguistic device skillfully in order to expose the differences and oppositions that are characteristic of our everyday life. Many of her characters die mysteriously and peacefully. Death makes life mysterious and, thus it is impossible to predict the outcome of events or the duration of our staying [1].

Munro views writing as invention of ideas where writing is spontaneous and words flow freely. In Munro's texts there is an extensive use of intertextuality, symbols, paradoxes and metaphor. For Munro, words are of utmost importance. The cadence, beauty and rhythmic flow of Munro's language give her fictional works a poetic appeal. Munro does not rewrite her texts; she rather adheres to the first draft and, in this way, she believes that the originality and the final impact of her writing are actually maintained [15].

Munro shows all the characteristics of good style. In her fictions Munro employs expressive devices like disjunctive syntax, telegraphic sentences and lexical choices. Munro is both elegant and careful in the choice of words, particularly the use of unexpected adjectives, formation of balanced sentences, use of idioms and contrasts and oppositions. Munro frequently composes a sentence or a paragraph using constructions having the word 'but' or some cognate to create a contrast or shift in meaning. Though Munro comes from a part of the world that challenges ambition and eccentricity, she courageously responds to that challenge with opposition by insisting on what is different and unique. She composes her writing basically by dramatic antithesis. In her works statements provoke counter-statements, subversions or complications and the sentences, paragraphs and stories advance by such contraventions. The truth is never the truth but a truth with caveats, conditions and perorations [15], [16].

#### 7) Narrative Discourse

Munro has not followed any rules of composition; therefore, her narrative art cannot be situated within any particular framework; it incorporates all the theoretical features and concepts of modern times. Munro has actually succeeded in producing a new narrative form in Canadian

fictional literature: she has experimented with various narrative techniques and has not told the story in the traditional way with clear chronological sequences and conclusive ends. Her stories develop horizontally where events are juxtaposed against each other. Therefore, her stories seem disjointed and fragmentary. In each of her stories, there are multiple narratives with one story overlapping each other. Instead of adopting a particular narrative framework, Munro has framed her narratives to represent the complex events of life. Talking about her art, Munro has commented that she often violates the principles of the short story form and does not conform to the rules of progression adopted in writing novels. She narrates what happens to somebody in an old-fashioned way; however, she likes to deliver 'what-happens' with some interruption and turnarounds so that the reader would feel astonished at how everything happens. For this reason, long short story fictions best satisfy her views [9].

Munro's technique of storytelling is complex since meanings are oblique and paradoxical. Her fiction is featured by metanarratives where the plot is complicated by the presence of stories within the story. In her stories the reader finds a piling of layers one on top of the other. In this regard, Munro has described the writing of her narrative art a process of gathering different "baggage of memories" with as many layers as possible from people and then holds these memories together in one frame [10].

A close reading of Munro's fiction reveals that sentences are embedded with layers of implicit meanings where the reader needs to scan through in order to arrive at the inner truth. Reference [17] comments that her art has "onion-skinned layers of multiple meanings and levels of reality" (p.164). Munro explores the inner selves behind the masks we wear in order to discover the deeper unfathomable depths of the human personality. Through her fiction Munro implies that human experiences cannot be narrated within a definite framework. This explains why each of her stories is told in series of events, presented in a disjointed manner to reflect the discontinuity of life itself. Through her art Munro has sought to convey her vision of life and her reflections on the paradoxes of human existence.

Readers and critics are usually attracted by the "how" of Munro's stories than the "what"; i.e. the form than content: style and narrative technique. Munro has experimented with the form of the short story genre by means of adopting non-linear, digressive and montage-like style highlighting the amazing and exceptional in our everyday life. Munro's texts reflect the interrelatedness between fiction and reality. Munro concentrates on the incomplete, the fragmented and the unfathomable of human existence. By giving focus to the fleeting and the momentary, she repeatedly highlights the inability of literary texts to portray the entire scope of even a single individual life. Consequently, the author's texts are a series of episodes, a sequence of snapshots with consonant explanation gaps that are subject to various interpretations by the reader. The structural principle of parallel extension rather than linear sequencing is adopted by Munro whereby fixed meanings of the variability and ambiguity of the human

existence are withheld. In Munro's works the format of the short story in terms of an episodic time structure and a fragmented presentation and open endings reflects the features of our life. Such a narrative technique produces multidimensional stories that interest readers to continue deciphering the text [8].

A common feature of Munro's art is using the retrospective narrative technique whereby she keeps balance between different points of view. Using a third-person narrator, the narrator is free to intervene at any time she likes and by moving backwards and forward, the author reminds her reader of what John Orange calls "inexorable change and unfathomable fate". The author achieves this through the use of reflections, flashbacks and spatial intervals. The narrator frequently reminisces about the past and then returns to the present at crucial points for the on-going action [15].

#### *a) Juxtaposition of the Past and the Present*

Munro's literary works frequently contain instances of anachrony that signal some relationship between the past and the present. Each of Munro's stories is an attempt to survey the lives of girls and women in particular in an expanded way, presenting a whole life, not just the epiphany of the moment which is the key characteristic of the short story. In his critical analysis of Munro's style, [13] remarks that Munro utilizes various devices in order to create the feeling of life which is extended through time. One of such devices, which are frequently employed by Munro in her narrative universe, is the use of time shifts in favor of linear chronological order of events. In such a way, the author often either jumps backwards to fill in a past event or leaps forward surprising her reader with the changes caused by time. Such shifts are signaled by some segmentation of the literary text and triple-spacing between sections which might be of six or seven pages long. Subsequently, it is sometimes impossible for a reader to predict to which stage in the main character's life they are taken by the author; it is only at the end of the story that the ordering of the various parts of the story is essential to the effects that have been created by the author throughout the story.

The notion of linear chronology has been rejected by Munro as it is clear in many of her literary works. Reference [18] notes that both the geographical and chronological settings portrayed in Munro's narratives resemble the life pattern of departure and return. Munro frequently shuttles freely between the unities of time, using the present then the past and, at some other times, the future. Therefore, one significant characteristic of Munro's short stories is the constant shift between the present time and the past events and situations. There is often a disruption of chronological order where the past, the present and the future merge together and, consequently, they lose their normal chronological order and move towards an eternal present. In "Too Much Happiness", for example, the reader gets to learn about the protagonist's past through her flashbacks and dreams. The reader often has a feeling of uncertainty of what is true and what is not true and is, accordingly, required to impose their own interpretation

and reconstruct what happened in the story [3].

In commenting on her writing technique, Munro explains that she never adopts a chronological or linear development. Munro's stories are not meant to be read in the traditional way from beginning to end. Though traditional short stories are conventionally characterized by unity of time and place, the contrary is found in Munro's collections. Munro invites the reader to experiment in every possible way: from end to beginning or to simply go into the story at any certain part – whether in the middle or towards the end and continue from there. In this way, Munro's stories surprise and, consequently, present "what is outside in a new way". Munro is among the few writers who draw particular attention to the architecture of their works. Her stories require careful reading since the narration always proceeds in a digressive manner rather than a linear one. Though the reader might easily follow the plot of a story by the author, they gradually realize how intricate the structure of the story is and how densely developed the subjects of the story are [15].

Alice Munro is among the Canadian writers who have applied the photographic techniques in their fictional narratives. In her fiction, photography acquires paramount importance. Munro explores the potential of photographic representation of the thoughts and emotions of her characters as well as the paradoxical situations of life. She also presents the ugly and the grotesque which is an essential part of human life. Munro has frequently expressed her interest in photography; hence, her short stories reflect her keen desire to project a clear and vivid picture of life. This presentation is mixed with irony and humour which demonstrates her greatness as an artist. Munro strongly believed that human life is a juxtaposition of happenings taking place in the life of an individual. In Munro's fiction the narrative art proceeds in a nonlinear pattern through the use of snapshots taken at various moments of life. The story moves back and forth in time; in this way, life is successfully depicted in its total variety in a holistic form through photography. Munro's ability to skillfully project the minutest details of human life has gained the admiration of both readers and critics. Since photography conceals more than it reveals, Munro's work is complex and open-ended; hence, the reader is continually required to search for the implicit hidden meaning. In Munro's fictional art, the synthesis between illusion and reality as well as between stillness and motion is achieved by photographic representation [10].

#### *B. "Too Much Happiness": An Overview*

The short story "Too Much Happiness", the title story in Alice Munro's collection, is the one under analysis in this study. It is set on the European continent and has a historical protagonist since the story is a brief biography of the Russian Mathematician and novelist Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-1891), the first woman who was successfully appointed as a Professor of Mathematics at a European University in Stockholm. The story concentrates on the last few weeks of Sophia's life and describes her journey by train moving from Genoa towards Stockholm where she dies only a few days after her arrival.

The journey lasts for eight days with stops in Paris and Berlin. The story moves to a particular ending: the geographical destination of Stockholm and the protagonist's unrealistic anticipation of marriage. The story ends with the death of the protagonist.

In her version of this biography, Munro dramatizes the severe historical and cultural restrictions that hindered the career of the protagonist. The author provides a vivid picture of the scientist and the artist who is continually involved in the search for truth irrespective of historical settings and limitations. Munro portrays an intellectual woman who struggles in order to achieve success and happiness. Similar to Munro's other protagonists, Sophia is a romantic and stubborn woman who aspires for both a family and a career. Munro highlights that Sophia suffers from misconceptions about a marriage that is never expected to take place. In other words, Sophia Kovalevsky attempted to escape from the stereotype of a woman who is typically assigned certain roles in a house or in a kitchen.

Regarding the structure of the story under analysis, it is divided into five numbered parts. Each of these parts envelopes a series of juxtaposed fragments which can be described as being similar to building blocks. They show separate or mixed scenes of Sophia's life either in the present, the past or the future. The non-linear picture of Sophia's life reiterates the new concepts that the protagonist attempts successfully to produce in the area of Mathematics [4].

### C. Pragmatic Stylistics

Pragmatics is a discipline which is concerned with the study of language in use; i.e. how language users communicate and interpret the linguistic behavior. Stylistics is another different discipline that originated as a way of applying linguistic approaches and models to some literary texts. It is the study of how closer attention to language use would contribute to the way texts are understood and evaluated [5]. According to [19], stylistics is "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation" and [20] views stylistics as an approach to the analysis of literary texts adopting some linguistic description. The aim of stylistic analysis is to explore the linguistic choices made by the writer of a literary text in the selection of words or sentence structure and how the style functions in projecting certain meanings. Since a text does not have a single, invariant meaning for all readers, literary stylisticians started to make use of the insights offered by the field of Pragmatics. Traditionally stylistic analysis adopting a structuralistic approach aimed at exploring the meaning of a literary text; however, it gradually went beyond that moving towards a more pragmatic orientation linking choices in the text to the social and cultural context. Thus, stylisticians began to be more interested in exploring how features of a text are viewed in relation to the context in which it is produced and received. They tend to study how the choices made by the author create the effect that the writer desires to convey to the reader [21].

#### 1) Literary and Non-literary Discourse

It is assumed that literary discourse is distinct from written

discourse or ordinary conversation since it has been carefully composed and thoroughly revised. Stylistic analysis reveals that the impact of some linguistic resources such as figures of speech; for example, metaphor and simile, can be greater in literary than in non-literary discourse. In addition, the literary text is self-contained and the literary discourse is typically addressed to absent audience; the message is conveyed via the words of the character which might be transmitted through the voice of the narrator [22].

#### 2) Context

In general, it can be claimed that context is created by a particular discourse. Context may have various views by different theorists. For example, [23] defines context as the immediately preceding discourse and the situation of the participants. The beginning of a written text gives the reader the necessary orientation into the discourse since it is not preceded by anything. However, other elements such as the title, appearance or author of a written text serve to contextualize the text. Reference [24] argues that context is the responsibility of the hearer who processes an utterance by obtaining access to the information which is considered necessary. Thus, the same utterance may be interpreted differently by different people. This depends mainly on the amount of information they have and what they consider relevant in addition to their awareness of social conventions.

#### 3) Deictic Expressions

The linguistic difference between literary and non-literary discourse can be evident in one area which is deixis. Deictics can be defined as "pointing words" that include personal pronouns, tensed verbs in addition to demonstratives such as *these, this, that*, and time and place expressions such as *now, then, here, yesterday, today*. In fictional discourse these expressions are used in ways which are different from ordinary usage. They play a significant role in establishing the spatio-temporal perspective of a narrative. They also help the reader to identify the perspective of the narrator or the character. For example, the fact that 'I' is not necessarily identical with the sender or 'you' with the addressee results in dense multi-layered discourse that requires interpretation by the reader on various levels [25], [22].

### III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reviewing the literature has revealed several previous studies on some of the key characteristics of the style of the Canadian short story writer Alice Munro. These research studies are either related to the novella under analysis in the present study or to some other works by Munro investigating the key characteristics of her art and style.

Boucherie [4] has conducted a thorough analysis of the title story of Munro's short story collection *Too Much Happiness*. The analysis foregrounds the severe cultural and historical restrictions that hindered the career of the Russian Mathematician and novelist Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-1891), the first woman who was appointed for a chair at a European university in Stockholm. The author has portrayed a

vivid picture of the artist and the scientist who is concerned with the search for truth despite such cultural and historical constrictions.

Vancoppennolle [26] has given a background of Munro's life and career and outlined some of the Gothic elements of Munro's style. The author analyzes each story of Munro's collection *Too Much Happiness* giving focus to the thematic features and rendering evidence to Munro's fiction as having a Gothic twist.

Zsizsmann [27] has conducted a study on the novella "Too Much Happiness" where it is viewed as a text about travelling in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. It aims to analyze the discourse of 'displacement' and the gains and losses of travelling. The author describes the novella under analysis as "an elliptical historical fiction and a spiritual travelogue". Moreover, the analysis also highlights a prominent feature of Munro's storytelling which is crossing the borders between personal memoir, history and fiction.

Naddi [28] has conducted a study which aims to analyze the contrast between the city and the countryside as clearly illustrated in two of Munro's short stories in *Too Much Happiness*: "Fiction" and "Wenlock Edge". The analysis shows how characters undergo a physical as well as an emotional journey as they move between the two worlds.

In his article on the significant features of the style of Alice Munro, Boyd [13] comments that Munro has made good contribution towards elevating the status of the short story in the minds of both readers and critics. The author mentions that Munro does not only concentrate on the epiphany of the moment but gives us the meaning of a whole life as extended through time. Among the stylistic devices employed by the author are the rejection of chronological order in favor of time-shifts, the segmentation of her texts and the presentation of different points of view in her stories.

Alshara et al. [29] have analyzed the autobiographical elements in Munro's story "Dear Life". The stylistic characteristics of the author in this regard are highlighted and supported by textual evidence from the story under analysis. The analysis shows that though there are events resembling Munro's life, they are artistically portrayed in order to serve the purpose of the literary work and the stylistic demands of the story. The authors conclude that Munro's magnificent style and the blend of fiction and autobiographical features make the story interesting and worth analyzing.

Within the context of these studies, one particular characteristic of Munro's fiction which is still being under-researched is the juxtaposition of the past and the present. Hence, this research is an attempt to bring into the spotlight this remarkably recurrent feature in Munro's fiction, with reference to the title story of one of her short story collections *Too Much Happiness*, adopting a pragmatic approach; i.e. analyzing the context and relevant deictic expressions.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### A. Data Selection

The data for the present research are the title story of

Munro's collection *Too Much Happiness*. This short story has been selected since it satisfies the aim of the research which is exploring one of the salient stylistic features that characterize the Canadian short story writer Alice Munro: the juxtaposition of the past and the present. The novella is an attempt to survey the life of the mathematician and novelist, Sophia Kovalevsky, the first woman who was appointed as a Professor of Mathematics at a European University in Stockholm. The story under analysis is characterized by the disruption of the normal chronological order where the protagonist moves freely between the present and the past, thus depicting the mysterious complex nature of human life as extended through time.

##### B. Data Collection

The short story "Too Much Happiness" was downloaded in its digital version as an e-book from the internet by the researcher.

##### C. Theoretical Framework

The researcher has adopted a Pragmatic Stylistic approach [22]. An attempt has been made to examine one stylistic feature, which is the juxtaposition of the past and the present, in one literary work by the Canadian short story writer, Alice Munro, from a pragmatic perspective. The focus has been on examining the context and the deictic expressions (tenses, pronouns and spatial or temporal expressions) in the parts of the story where there are time shifts with the narrator navigating between the present and the past. The research design is qualitative since it has allowed for an in-depth analysis of the short story "Too Much Happiness" with a particular focus on the extracts where the narrator moves to the past through dreams or flashbacks.

##### D. Procedures of Analysis

1. The short story was read several times by the researcher.
2. A close analysis of the short story under investigation was conducted.
3. Parts where the protagonist moves backwards to the past and shuttles between the past and the present have been extracted and analyzed using a Pragmatic Stylistic approach [22] with a special focus on context and deictic expressions, especially tensed verbs, pronouns and spatial or temporal deictic expressions.

In the following section these parts are being accompanied by an explanation of their context and a commentary on deictic words and expressions.

#### V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The present study is an attempt to analyze the juxtaposition of the past and the present with reference to Munro's novella "Too Much Happiness" adopting a Pragmatic Stylistic perspective. This section presents a number of eight key scenes of Sophia's life selected from the five parts of the short story under analysis where the protagonist shuttles between the present and the past. In each of these extracts the context is explained and the deictic expressions that contribute to the



realization of the juxtaposition of the past and the present are highlighted.

#### A. *"Too Much Happiness": Part I*

The short story "Too Much Happiness" opens with these words:

On the first day of January, in the year 1891, a small woman and a large man are walking in the Old Cemetery, in Genoa . . . His name suits him. Maksim. Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky.

The woman with him is also a Kovalevsky. She was married to a distant cousin of his, but is now a widow.

You know that one of us will die,' she says. 'One of us will die this year.'

Only half listening, he asks her, why is that?

'Because we have gone walking in a graveyard on the first day of the New Year.' [30, p.184]

The woman described in this opening part by the narrator is Sophia Kovalevsky, a great mathematician and also a writer and advocate of women's rights during the nineteenth century. The man in the cemetery turns out to be Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky who is the lover of the protagonist and a distant cousin of Sophia's deceased husband. In order to describe the context of the fictional world to which the reader is first invited, the author uses spatial-temporal deictic expressions that refer to the present situation in the narrative: "On the first day of January", "in the year 1891", "in the Old Cemetery", "in Genoa", "at present", "this year" and "on the first day of the New Year". These proximal expressions function to draw the reader speedily into the discourse. Nearly all verbs in the opening part of the story are in either the present simple; e.g. "is", "has", "speaks", or the present continuous; e.g. "are walking", "is crouching". There is a predominant use of the instantaneous present which denotes the simultaneity of the narration and the event taking place. In the opening part of the story from which this part is extracted, there are only two instances of the present perfect in "has been forbidden" and "have gone" indicating some recent actions in the past which have some present results. There is a shift to the past simple tense in "was married" which indicates a finished action and one instance of the future form in "will die" which expresses some prediction of a future happening. In the opening sentence, there is a marked use of indefinite articles in "a man" and "a woman" which shift to definite articles in the rest of the extract- "the man" and "the woman". Their referents of the third person subject pronouns "he" and "she" and possessive pronouns "his" and "her" are the man and the woman previously described at the beginning of the opening paragraph. The subject pronoun "you" and the object pronoun "us" in "you know that one of us will die" have the same referents. Thus, the use of deictic expressions (spatial-temporal expressions, tensed verbs, articles and pronouns) helps the reader to identify the context.

In a typical Munroian style, a gloomy atmosphere is prevailing from the first pages of the story: "One of us will die this year. [...] Because we have gone walking in a graveyard on the first day of the New Year" [30, p.184]. Later on, in Part

I, "On the station platform a black cat obliquely crosses their path. She detests cats, particularly black ones." [30, p.188] which is a further clue to a sad ending. Throughout the story, the author provides the reader with several clues that Sophia's physical and mental health is deteriorating rapidly. In part III, "And her sore throat and slight shivers, surely a full-fledged cold coming on her." [30, p.199]

The rest of Part I purposefully situates the reader into the present situation of the narrative. During these days, the protagonist feels extremely happy for what she has named:

... two triumphs- her paper ready for its last polishing and anonymous submission, her lover growling but cheerful, eagerly returned from his banishment and giving every indication, as she thought, that he intended to make her the woman of his life [30, p.185].

However, the words "as she thought" in this quote using the past tense "thought" is a clue that this marriage is merely one of Sophia's romantic fantasies. There are several clues that Maksim has rejected her, proposing that instead of visiting him, she should alternatively join her friends and students in Sweden, and most important, her little daughter. Maksim had "felt himself ignored" [30, p.185] when Sophia received the Bordin Prize. Thus, the narrator highlights the hardships encountered by an intelligent woman to find a man in those days. Sophia once refused a proposal from a German for the reason that she suspected him of "wanting a hausfrau". In his letter to Sophia, Maksim refers to her faulty motherhood and ends that letter with the lines "If I loved you, I would have written differently" [30, p.186]. At the beginning, Sophia is shocked by this news, but she decides to "swallow her pride" [30, p.187], thus ignoring his rejection. She constantly deceives herself by saying that they are going to get married in spring. The use of the past simple tense in the first part of the conditional sentence and the modal "would", which is followed by the past perfect in the second part, signifies that the situation is a hypothetical one in the present; it is not a real one that can be possible at present.

#### B. *"Too Much Happiness": Part II*

In Part I of the story, the narrator describes the protagonist's trip to Nice in order to meet Maxim. Following this trip, Sophia takes the train to Paris for the purpose of meeting Jaclard, her dead sister's husband, and Urey, her nephew. Afterwards, she moves to Berlin in order to visit Weierstrass, her old teacher of Mathematics. During these trips, Sophia falls asleep and dreams of her past days. It is through these flashbacks that the reader gets to be acquainted with Sophia's whole life. In order to arrive at a coherent whole, the reader needs to link the different parts together. First, Sophia dreams of Anuita, her sister who was a beautiful girl fighting for women's right and who fell in love with Jaclard, the French radical. Anuita's lover was imprisoned during the French-Prussian war and was subsequently set free by Vladimir, Sophia's husband:

Sophia dozes again, slips into another dream in which she and Aniuta are both young but not so young as when at Palbino, and they are together in Paris and Aniuta's

lover Jaclard . . . is fighting somewhere outside of Paris, and Aniuta has gone looking for him [30, p.191].

The first part of the opening sentence of this extract: "Sophia dozes again, slips into another dream . . ." indicates the present moment for the protagonist in her fictional world since the present tense is used in "dozes" and "slips" and the meaning conveyed is that the narrator is moving to the past through a dream. What is remarkable about this part of the story is that the narrator is using present tenses; e.g. "are", "is", "is fighting", "runs", "is looking", though she moves backwards in memory to a past situation. The narrator here abandons using the past tense and uses the 'historical' present which is radically different from the instantaneous present that describes an action as it takes place at the time of narration. At last, in this part of the story, Sophia is navigating to a hypothetical future situation using the future form "will get" imagining that she will be saved out of this situation by Maxim. The use of spatial deictic expressions such as "Paris", "a huge Parisian hospital", "Hotel Splendide" provides the reader with clues for the context of the narrated situation. These are distal expressions that denote remoteness from the present situation in the narrative. There is a marked use of the subject third-person pronoun "she" which refers to either Sophia or her sister Aniuta, and the third person pronoun "he" or "him" referring to Jaclard. In this scene, the use of deictic expressions (tensed verbs, spatial deictic expressions, pronouns) signals the gradual movement of the protagonist from the current situation in the narrative to the past through a dream.

### C. *"Too Much Happiness": Part III*

Following her short visit to Jaclard, Sophia gets back to the station. She dozes again while waiting for the train and when awakened by the noise of the incoming train, she comes across a man who looks like Maxim and starts wondering what Maxim is doing in Paris at that time. Then she immediately realizes that it was only a mere hallucination. The protagonist prohibits herself from facing reality since she always clings to her finally achieved happiness.

In her next dream while she is still on the train during her trip, Sophia remembers the day when she won the Bordin Prize. In her flashback, her memory is back to all the celebrations and congratulations she received on this happy occasion in her life:

Then they had given her the Bordin Prize, they had kissed her hand and presented her with speeches and flowers in the most elegant lavishly lit rooms. But they had closed their doors when it came to giving her a job [30, p.198-199].

In this extract when there is a reference to a past incident, the past perfect tense is being used in "had given", "had kissed", "had closed" to emphasize the past before the present moment of narration. With regard to perfect tenses, the reader is provided with information that needs to be organized in a temporal sequence for understanding the development of the plot. The distal pronoun "they" is used several times without reference to a particular referent. There is a marked use of the

third person pronoun "he" whose referent is the protagonist. In the last part of the extract, there is antithesis between receiving the prize and giving her a job. The but-construction in "they had closed their doors when it came to giving her a job" signals this antithesis. Then she remembers the day when she first met her mentor, Professor Karl Weierstrass, and the great efforts she exerted in order to convince him of her mathematical qualities. Later on, he admitted that she was the student he had always hoped for:

A student who would challenge him completely, who was not only capable of following the strivings of his own mind but perhaps of flying beyond them . . . there must be something like intuition in a first-rate mathematician's mind [30, p.201].

In this extract the protagonist moves again to the past; there is a marked use of the past tense, whether past simple or past perfect. The past perfect denotes the distant past that precedes the past situation referred to in this extract as being remembered by the protagonist in her present moment. The perfect tense has a pragmatic interpretation which is different from the past simple. All subject and object third-person pronouns; e.g. "he" and "him" refer to Professor Karl Weierstrass.

In light of this extract, Sophia is not viewed by her tutor as a woman, but rather a blessing to himself: "a gift to me and to me alone". Since she was not allowed by her father to go abroad to study mathematics, she married Vladimir Kovalevsky explaining that young women who wanted to study abroad were forced to be go through such a deception. As the narrator explains in the story, at that time no Russian woman who was unmarried could study abroad or leave her country for any reason without the consent of her own parents.

### D. *"Too Much Happiness": Part IV*

The whole of Part IV of the story is a flashback to the past: the past memories of her early days of marriage to Vladimir and the birth of her daughter and the death of her parents and, most important, the struggle that her deceased husband Vladimir had with the Ragozins. Despite the fact that it was a marriage without love or emotion, some years later Sophia moves in with Vladimir and gives birth to a little daughter. During these years, she decides to abandon mathematics and starts writing fiction, thus enjoying a "celebration of life itself" [30, p.210]. She eventually has the feeling of a normal woman who can enjoy life without significant or major achievements. However, Vladimir abandons teaching and gets involved in serious financial problems. Eventually, he commits suicide which has been devastating to Sophia. It is her Professor who actually helps her earn money. Ultimately, she is provided with the opportunity of becoming the first female Professor of Mathematics at a European university.

The first sections of Part IV disclose the happy feelings of the protagonist upon knowing that the University of Stockholm accepted to appoint her as the first female Professor of Mathematics, thus being the first one to be appointed in a European university:

She was too busy, wrapped up in more or less constant

celebration. A celebration of name days and court honors and new operas and ballets, but really, it seemed to be, a celebration of life itself [30, p.212].

This extract signals another movement to the past where the protagonist refers to a past incident which is the approval of Stockholm University of appointing her as the first Professor of Mathematics. This is reflected in the use of the past simple tense in the verbs “was”, “seemed”, “agreed”. Later on, in this extract from the story, there is also some use of spatial deictic expressions in “University of Stockholm” and “Europe” which denote physical and psychological distance of the protagonist from the present moment in the narrative. The subject third-person pronoun “she” is a reference to Sophia.

#### *E. “Too Much Happiness”: Part V*

Following her visit to Berlin, Sophia decides to return to Stockholm via Copenhagen. While the protagonist is on the train, she comes across a friendly doctor who immediately recognizes her as “the female Professor” [30, p.215]. He advises her not to travel via Copenhagen due to the spread of a smallpox epidemic. Therefore, Sophia changes her tickets and is obliged to continue her journey in tiring circumstances. She takes the train and the boat alternately; however, both of them are not well-heated and Sophia's sore throat is deteriorating.

A close analysis of Part V of the story reveals the writer's switch from the present moment in the fictional discourse to past situations. There are three occasions where the narrator moves from the current situation to a past one. The first one takes place when she is on the train and “one woman took a fork out from a pocket in the folds of her clothing and ate pickled cabbage from a jar.” This made Sophia think of her home country, Russia. This triggered thoughts about the Russian peasants:

But what she really know about Russian peasants, the peasants at Palbino, when it comes to that? They were always putting on a show for their betters.

Except perhaps the one time, the Sunday when all the serfs and their owners had to go to church to hear the Proclamation read [30, p.217-218].

The opening part in this extract signals the spatial and temporal deictic expressions; e.g. “Russia”, “Palbino”, “Sunday”, for understanding the context. The protagonist moves to the past where there is a strong sense of nostalgia for her home country. With regard to tensed verbs, in this part of the story the past simple tense is predominantly used when the protagonist shuttles to the past; e.g. “sat down”, “wandered”, “laughed”, “called”, “were”, “appeared”, “took”, or past continuous such as “were putting”, “were eating”. When there is a reference point to some time prior to this past incident, the past perfect tense is used as in “had told” or “had snatched”. In fictional discourse the pragmatic interpretation of perfect tenses is different from that of the past simple tense.

The second instance where there is time shift to the past is when the protagonist remembers Maksim:

Would Maksim ever in his life board such a train as this? She imagines her head lying comfortable on his broad shoulder- though the truth is he would not care for

that, in public. His coat of rich expensive cloth, its smell of money and comfort . . . Now she had an image of him- Maksim, not sheltering her at all but striding through the station in Paris as befitted a man who had a private life [30, p.219].

In this extract the protagonist is asking herself a rhetorical question regarding her lover. This triggers an imaginary act where she imagines her head lying on his shoulder. This is followed by the temporal deictic word “now” which signals some return to the present moment where she imagines Maksim “striding through the station in Paris”. In the original part of the story from which this is an extract, there are six instances of the second person pronoun “you” and two instances of the related possessive adjective “your”. Here the narrator uses “you” with the sense of “one”. This is a common use of the pronoun in English. The “you” addressed is the interlocutor, presumably the reader since there is no other addressee in the text. The present tense is used by the author in describing Maxim. “Now” is a temporal deictic referring to the present moment of the protagonist in the fictional universe.

The third instance where there is some disruption of the chronological sequence is when she remembers a situation that happened to her when she was a twelve-year-old child:

There was one experience that this reminded her of.

That was her first stumbling on trigonometry, when she was twelve years old. . . She had never heard of sines or cosines, but by substituting the chord of an arc for the sine . . . she was able to break into this new and delightful language [30, p.222].

Similar to the previous extracts, the noun phrase “one experience” in the opening sentence introduces a clue that the protagonist remembers a past experience: her first encounter with mathematical problems. The demonstrative “that”, a distal deictic expression that refers to the experience and “twelve years old”, which is a temporal deictic expression and the spatial deictic expression “Palbino” set the context for this part. In this part of the story from which this is an extract, all pronouns are third-person pronouns referring to either the protagonist or the Professor. Regarding tense, there is a predominant use of the past tense, either the simple past for some past incident as in “came”, “began”, “opened”, “was”, or past perfect as in “had dropped off”, “had never heard” for some incident prior to this past experience.

When the protagonist arrives at Stockholm, she feels devastatingly ill in spite of the fact that she is not fully conscious of her illness. At first, she is in a cheerful, though melancholic, mood. However, late at night, she wanders through the snowy streets of Stockholm, unable to feel the cold and she views the city as if it is a fairytale. On her deathbed, Sophia is talking in a confusing manner and calling the Danish doctor “my husband” [30, p.224]. Two days later, the protagonist dies as a result of pneumonia and she utters “Too Much Happiness” as her last words.

In light of the above analysis, it can be stated that the juxtaposition of the present and the past in the novella under exploration is a prominent recurrent stylistic device that is realized through understanding the context and deictic

expressions such as spatial-temporal expressions and tense. Regarding tense, Munro is not only using the past tense when the protagonist moves to the past; the present tense can also be used to express a particular function. Moreover, the narration in third-person mode allowed the narrator to be a detached observer commenting freely on the feelings, attitudes and views of the protagonist. Additionally, one prominent feature in Munro's narrative discourse is the use of but-construction to express antithesis.

With regard to the function of juxtaposing the past and the present in the novella under investigation, the analysis shows that the employment of this stylistic device has helped the narrator to survey the life of the protagonist in an expanded way through mixed juxtaposed episodes, presenting the whole life of the protagonist, not just the epiphany of the moment which is a key characteristic of Munro's short stories. In such a way, the short story reaches the complexity level of a novel through applying this retrospective technique. Furthermore, it has led to achieving one particular artistic function which is projecting the mysterious complexities and the constant change characteristic of real life.

In conclusion, this section has presented a number of eight key scenes in Sophia's life selected from the five parts of the short story under analysis where the protagonist shuttles between the present and the past. In each of these extracts the context has been explained and the deictic expressions that contribute to the realization of the juxtaposition of the past and the present have been highlighted.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research has investigated one of the most salient stylistic features of the Canadian short story writer Alice Munro, which is the juxtaposition of the past and the present, as reflected in the title story of her short story collection *Too Much Happiness*. This story is based on "Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky" (1983) where Munro portrays the last few days of Sophia's life during the time when she thinks that she has achieved happiness on both the personal and the academic levels: she has won the Bordin Prize, has survived the deaths of her husband and sister and is about to get married again. The writer in this story rewrites history by exploring the life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century protagonist. As the short story is being narrated in the third person, the story is an account of the protagonist's experiences as she looks back at her past life as a detached observer. One of these features is the structural pattern of the story since the author of the novella disrupts the time sequence and shuttles constantly and freely between the past and the present. The narrative moves on in a digressive manner instead of a linear one where the author artfully juxtaposes the different episodes in the life of the protagonist. In this way, the reader is led into a mesh of events where the distinction between reality and dream is completely blurred. Thus, the reader is invited to rearrange the pieces in a jigsaw to arrive at a holistic picture of Sophia's life. What Munro wants to highlight is the fact that life is never a static one; rather it is a state of constant flux and transformation.

"Too Much Happiness" reflects Munro's mastery of the narrative technique and her superb ability of portraying the complex happenings of life in her fictions. Instead of presenting the story in the conventional linear form, Munro freely uses time sequences to satisfy the conditions of the story. The narrator looks back at the past with a new angle of vision and reconstructs the past in light of the present. Thus, the happenings of the past become more fictitious since they are coloured by the imagination of the narrator. This produces some merge between reality and fantasy in the narrative. Such a retrospective technique accounts for the difficulties of interpretation frequently encountered by the reader. The non-linear and non-static picture of the protagonist's life effortlessly evokes the fluctuating nature of human life.

In order to analyze the juxtaposition of the past and the present in the novella under analysis, the researcher has adopted a Pragmatic Stylistic approach [22]. Parts where the protagonist moves to the past through dreams or memories have been identified and analyzed in terms of some pragmatic aspects: context and deictic expressions (tensed verbs, temporal-spatial expressions, demonstratives, etc.) thus highlighting one of the salient stylistic features of Munro's universe which is the juxtaposition of the past and the present as evident in the story under analysis. Moreover, the research is an attempt to relate two disciplines: Stylistics and Pragmatics. The literary work is analyzed in terms of context and deictic expressions which can pave the way to further research studies that can relate these two disciplines.

Munro's work reflects the secret mysteries that characterize human life. The story under investigation is characterized by other stylistic features such as ellipsis, metaphor and telegraphic sentences. Additionally, words are of paramount importance. The beauty, flow and elegance of Munro's language provide her short stories with a poetic appeal. Therefore, it is recommended that further research is conducted to explore other qualities of Munro's art as reflected in her fictions.

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